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Hunter Austin Interview



Interview With: Ms. Hunter Austin, Voice Actress
Interview Location: A Starbucks in Northridge
Interview Date: 08/30/05
Interview By: Nukunuku

Anime Dream:

How did you start voice acting — specifically anime dubbing?

Ms. Austin:

I started doing voice over when I was about fourteen. It was just one aspect of show business that seemed to go along with the on-camera acting I was also doing. I was acting on camera in commercials and TV shows for a long time, but had never heard of anime until just a few years ago. The first anime series I ever auditioned for was Starship Girl Yamamoto Yohko, and I got one of the lead roles: Madoka!

Anime Dream:

What attracts you to voice acting? And who or what was your motivation to pursue a career in voice acting?

Ms. Austin:

I love so many things about voice acting. It's a different way of being creative. I think anyone that is fortunate enough to work consistently is really blessed. I know I am. A voice-over session is rarely more than four hours for me. I do a lot of commercials, too, which most often take twenty minutes. Then I get to hear myself on the radio and TV, and as long as I've been doing this, it's still exciting. I can dress however I want, I meet new people all the time, and I get paid for doing something that leaves me feeling good in every way. That certainly doesn't suck! These may seem like simple things, but I really appreciate getting to live out the dream I've had since I was a little girl imitating voices into a tape recorder!

Anime Dream:

What is your favorite anime series, and do you have a favorite character?

Ms. Austin:

The truth is I don't have a favorite because I haven't actually watched very many. I still haven't even seen half the shows I'm in! Oh, wait... I loved L/R-Licensed By Royalty! That's probably my favorite. Playing Hikari in Haibane Renmei was one of my favorite roles so far, because there's something about the style of animation that mesmerized me. The muted colors and the storyline stuck in my mind.

Anime Dream:

How did you get involved with New Generation Pictures?

Ms. Austin:

I sent them a voice over demo, and they called me in to audition. They cast me in one show, and it just never stopped. I think I'm on my eighth or ninth series with them! Everyone there has been amazing to me. I have such an affinity for Jonathan Klein. He's just a really nice person. I've worked with all these other talented directors through them, and it's always a great experience.

Anime Dream:

Which character you've portrayed relates to you most, in terms of looks, personality, and the situation?

Ms. Austin:

Hikari in Haibane. We're both really shy, and always trying to help. Her personality and voice was more like my own. I don't have glasses like her, but we do look alike!

Anime Dream:

What part of voice acting do you enjoy the most, and the least?

Ms. Austin:

The best thing is having a desire to work in voice over and being allowed to do it. You know when you have a desire to accomplish something? I get to accomplish my desires. It's always an opportunity to affect whoever hears me, whether it's someone in the studio that day, or someone watching the show on TV.

Anime Dream:

How do you prepare for a given role, or is there any specific way of getting yourself ready?

Ms. Austin:

Oh my gosh! I'm embarrassed to say I don't even read the scripts ahead of time. I used to but even for the 26 episodes of R.O.D the TV, I never read a script until I got into the booth and started recording. It just works better for me that way. I know some actors who study the show in Japanese and read ahead, which is great. I used to do that, but I tend to have more energy when I'm seeing it for the first time, right before I perform. Even when I do commercials, most of the time we don't even see the lines until 2 seconds before they say, "Action!" If my character has a lot of long paragraphs, I make sure I read the lines out loud in English, when they play back the preview of the scene in Japanese. That helps me to match the lip flaps, which can be tricky!

Anime Dream:

If there's any character or show you wanted to play but couldn't, or would love to play in the future?

Ms. Austin:

I'd certainly like to be in a big, animated feature!

Anime Dream:

Your resume lists a lot of supporting roles. Do you see yourself performing more lead characters in the future?

Ms. Austin:

Yes, and I have a lot of lead roles coming up. It's also fun to get to do a bunch of characters in the same show. I've been recording great parts in Girls Bravo, Daphne in the Brilliant Blue, Melody of Oblivion, Daydreamers, Mermaid Forrest....

Anime Dream:

Did you enjoy Haibane Renmei, and how did it feel to be part of such a wonderful series?

Ms. Austin:

It was awesome! I remember the day I auditioned for the part of Hikari. I knew I really wanted to be on that show. I enjoyed every moment of it, and even have screenings of it in my little home theater. I have a 9 foot by 10 foot screen, a candy counter and balcony seating upstairs! Haibane is my favorite "screening" material, and it's beautiful to watch.

Anime Dream:

Which voice actor/actress would you say has the best voice?

Ms. Austin:

There are so many, I can't even choose. I admire the "legends" in the industry. I run into these highly respected voice actors when I go to my agent's (most auditions are at my agent's office), and I can't even believe I'm in the same booth with them. Then there are the actors I've gotten familiar with through New Gen. Carrie Savage is really talented, Rachel Hirschfeld who plays my little sister Anita on R.O.D. the TV... she's really good, and she's only 12! I'm constantly inspired by Taliesin Jaffe who directs AND does a million voices in every accent. The list goes on....

Anime Dream:

Are there any roles that you have been offered, but had to refuse for one reason or another?

Ms. Austin:

Yes, but only a few. One was on camera, a feature film that wasn't something I'd feel right or good about doing. The other was in an anime project. Sometimes I don't audition and am lucky enough to just be asked to be in a show. This role was really sexual and violent. I hadn't had a chance to even get a script, so I wouldn't have known until I started actually recording. Fortunately, the producers called me and said they felt they should tell me what the role consisted of before I said I would do it. They knew me well enough to know I would regret doing something like that, but they really wanted my voice for it. They even suggested we use a "voice double," if I wasn't comfortable with some of the scenes. I wanted the job because it was 12 episodes and a lead. After talking, they decided to go with someone else, even though my voice was right for it. I think someone is watching out for me, because I usually only get the roles I really want and feel are right. And then guess what happened? I got one of the leads in R.O.D. the TV, for twice as many episodes, playing a character I absolutely feel great about!!

Anime Dream:

So far you've worked for New Generation Pictures. Would you like to work with Animaze, Bang Zoom, or any other local Los Angeles studios?

Ms. Austin:

I would love to work with all of them! I've never even sent my demo to any other anime studios.

Anime Dream:

Have you acted on Live Action shows, i.e. TV series, movies, theatrical production, or even in a commercial? What work outside of voice acting do you do?

Ms. Austin:

In front of the camera, I played Matthew Perry's (Chandler on "Friends") girlfriend on The Tracey Ullman Show, and guest-starred on a lot of TV shows like Murder She Wrote, Young and the Restless.... Lifetime just ran my episode of What Should You Do, where I had a great role as a drug addict! I starred on a Disney series called Teen Angel for 12 episodes, and that was fun. You can see me in a bunch of commercials right now, which are listed on the NEWS page of my website: <http://www.hunteraustin.com/>.

Anime Dream:

Last but not least: As a woman and especially as a Christian, what is your opinion on the sex and violence in many anime series?

Ms. Austin:

Well, I had no idea (and probably still don't) just how much sex and violence there is in anime. Being a Christian, it's definitely something I think about, though. This is the hardest question and the most important one for me. I know I was incredibly influenced by what I watched on TV growing up. I LOVED Little House on the Prairie, and to this day, I know its wholesomeness and good values gave me such a sense of foundation. I looked to television to feel like a part of something, and TV molded me in a sense. In a hopeful, inspiring way. I kind of worries me that the sex and violence might be molding people now. But then again, there are so many really good shows that are giving people enjoyment. I wish I could meet every single person that's into anime. It would be so cool to break through the screen and find out about them and what they like about what they're seeing and hearing. Even though it's just "acting," I know that people are watching and being influenced. Now that I'm ON the TV, I feel like I can do something more than just being the voice. This whole anime thing is so much bigger than I knew! I find myself reading anime magazines and going to the anime store, lately. I'm happy if fans are watching and getting excitement and joy from it :o)

Anime Dream:

And finally, do you have any message for your fans?

Ms. Austin:

I want to say thank you to all of you who watch R.O.D the TV, and all the other shows I've been fortunate enough to be on. Without people watching, we have no shows! Anime Expo in Anaheim was a blast, and thank you also to those of you who came to the R.O.D panel! It was so awesome to get spend time with true anime fans! I had so much fun getting to meet so many fun and sweet people. I took pictures of everyone! Hopefully, I'll get to go to more of the conventions and hang out more. I truly appreciate

everyone, and I want them to know :o). Thank you to my new friend Andrew for interviewing me. Do you know this thoughtful guy got me an R.O.D wall scroll? How sweet was THAT?! Oh, and by the way, if you're reading this and then you see me at a convention or some other place, please come up and say hi. I'm all about the love!!!

The staff of Anime Dream thanks Ms. Austin for taking time out of her busy schedule for this interview.

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